

United States Senate

November 9, 2021

The Honorable Janet Yellen
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Secretary Yellen:

We write to urge you to consider how the Treasury Department can help increase access to voting by directing that nonpartisan voter registration services be made available at all Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) centers across the country.

As you know, the VITA program helps partner organizations deliver free tax preparation services to millions of taxpayers across our nation each year. This critical program provides assistance to underserved communities, including low- to moderate-income individuals, people with disabilities, seniors, and non-English speakers. Such individuals are often also the least likely to be touched by typical voter registration efforts, even in states that maintain robust voter registration programs.

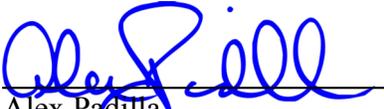
We appreciate that the Biden Administration has made a strong commitment to promoting access to voting, including through the President's Executive Order 14019, which directs federal agencies to submit a strategic plan outlining the ways that the agency can promote nonpartisan voter registration and voter participation. In the summary of the agency plans released by the White House in September, the Treasury Department does not appear to consider leveraging the VITA program to promote nonpartisan voter outreach. We believe this is a missed opportunity.

A 2019 Brookings Institution trial study found that offering voter registration services at a subset of VITA sites more than doubled the likelihood of an unregistered person registering to vote without slowing the tax preparation process. The study also found that replicating these voter registration drives at all VITA sites could result in approximately 115,000 unregistered eligible voters registering to vote, including 63,000 individuals who would not otherwise register. Furthermore, since the VITA program serves underserved populations, the study suggests that incorporating voter registration at VITA sites could help reduce disparities in participation between low- and high-income households.

We ask that you evaluate how the Treasury Department could direct the incorporation of nonpartisan voter registration services into the VITA program. Such an effort would be consistent with the Treasury Department's obligations under the President's Executive Order, and more broadly, could constitute a meaningful step to promoting access to voting to otherwise underserved populations.

Considering that the new tax-filing season is just around the corner, we look forward to your promptly considering this matter, and providing us a response explaining your findings. We look forward to working with you to enhance civic participation.

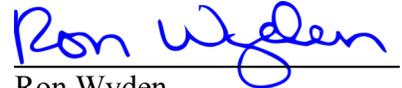
Sincerely,



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



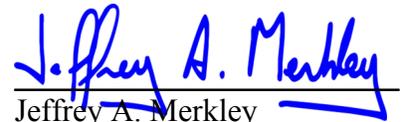
Jon Tester
United States Senator



Raphael G. Warnock
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



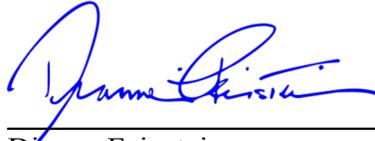
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



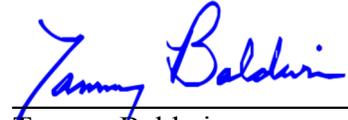
Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



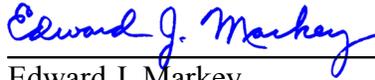
Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Jon Ossoff
United States Senator